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Preparing for return of 'Flim-Flam Man'

Annual sighting expected later this summer when taxing districts set rates

With our array of taxing districts poised to set tax rates later this summer, it seems only fitting that a 1960s movie titled "The Flim-Flam Man" included scenes shot right here in Lawrenceburg

That movie featured a pair of drifters who teamed up to gain the confidence of locals while bilking them out of their money. The key, of course, was to never let the local rubes know that they were having their pockets picked, which isn't all that different than the way the system to raise property taxes works.

Granted, this ruse wasn't invented locally — it's a state thing — and the elected and appointed people who perpetrate the ruse really have no other options. Well, the library folks do, but that's another story.

Nevertheless, here's how the scam, which is wholly dependent on its victims being gullible and paying almost no attention, works.

The victims — OK, taxpayers — are first bedazzled with a story filled with highfalutin numbers, formulae and words, all designed to gain their confidence before lulling them into a false sense of security.

The story is always the same, and goes something like this: "We've done all we can, Mr. and Mrs. Taxpayer, to be frugal with your money during the past year, but darn it all to heck, we just don't have enough money to continue providing all of these tremendous services, blah, blah, blah.

They will then carp and whine about increases in employees' retirement costs and medical insurance, and make it very, very clear that those issues are out of their control. (They never consider actually doing anything about those issues except complain, which is telling, don't you think?)

The stage set and the props in place, the con moves smoothly into the second act, which includes sheets of paper filled with six- and seven-digit numbers multiplied by smaller numbers that go four or five decimal places to the right. The expected outcome is to first glaze the eyes of those who vote on a tax rate (at least half of them have no clue what they're doing), and put the audience to sleep.

Buried in the data like a tick on a long-haired dog is several bottom lines, which tell the taxing district how much more money it will receive and what tax rate will be required to get it.

They'll get to choose from a variety of choices, including the notorious "compensating rate," a bald-faced lie of a formula that supposedly provides the same revenue to the district as it received the previous year.

It's a lie, frankly, because they know going in that new construction that has already been added to the assessed value of the county or city is excluded, but compensating sure sounds nice, right? Who doesn't want to be compensated?

The dirty little secret they rarely discuss — and hate that I point out — is what that decision does to your tax bill.

Here's an example: Last year, the fiscal court voted for a compensating rate (which generated \$63,000 in additional revenue, proving what a lie that term really is), congratulated itself and moved on.

But what it actually did was raise the rate you pay by 3.25 percent. That means instead of paying \$1.23 for every \$1,000 of your home or business' assessed property value, your rate jumped to \$1.27. No, that's not much, but it adds up fast when the other taxing districts do the same thing.

Then there's the city council, which went whole hog and raised its revenue by 4 percent, the maximum allowed without subjecting itself to a public vote. That raised the tax rate for city dwellers a nifty 6.6 percent, which also was never mentioned. Anyone out not on the city council who received a 6.6 percent raise last year raise your hand.

Didn't think so.

In fairness, there are a few elected people on these boards who genuinely do give a rip about your taxes, and certainly aren't running any cons.

If nothing else, though, I hope this at least gives the rest of them something to consider, and serve as a reminder that the rest of us pay for their decisions.

Comment at theandersonnews.com.

Who do you blame when good kids go bad?

Thirty-five seconds. The video kept recording the humiliation for about 10 minutes, but I had seen enough to convince me. What the eye sees, it can't erase.

So I procrastinated on viewing the infamous "Making the Bus Monitor Cry" for days. I knew about how horrible it was, and believed all of the outrage.

I don't consider myself a member of the morality police, and typically err on the side of free speech.

But the middle school boys portrayed in the video were not exercising First Amendment rights.

They were exorcising hate speech — profanity, threats, taunts to the point of tears — against a 68-year-old grandmother, an act of pure senseless I don't think I will ever be able to understand.

The video has reignited the old debate about nature versus nature, whose responsibility it is when good kids go bad:

Parents?
The kids?
Do children learn this

behavior, or create it themselves?

Even the highest court in the land is torn on the subject of culpability for underage offenders.

Five out of nine Supreme Court justices recently ruled against the idea of underage criminals being convicted to life in prison without a chance for parole.

After more than 7 million views on YouTube, "Making the Bus Monitor Cry" hasn't stopped viewers from weighing in on how the boys should be punished. Commentators have suggested creative and violent methods of ensuring the middle school students receive the message loud and clear.

Many, too many, act as though these teens represent all that is wrong and perilous about leaving the nation and the wrong in the hands of such despicable creatures.

I don't suggest defending their actions.

A week later, I'm still angry about what I saw.

But I'd like to be able to defend this younger generation, if no one else will.

According to an extensive 2010 Pew Research study that draws on more than two decades of conducted surveys,

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Ben Carlson
Publisher

Restaurant owner provided 'blessing'

To the editor:

After eating at Tony's Bar-B-Que Barn after a group motorcycle ride to Lawrenceburg on June 20, my motorcycle would crank but not start.

Tony Howard, the owner of the restaurant whom I'd never met, saw what was going on and asked if he could help. We informed Tony of the problem and he proceeded to empty the bed of his pickup truck.

Tony, I and several friends from Southeast Christian Church in Louisville loaded my bike onto his truck, and Tony drove me to Louisville and dropped me off at home.

Folks, this was an 84-mile roundtrip from someone I had never met. What an unbelievable blessing.

In return, I'm doing my best to spread the word about Tony, his restaurant and his unbelievable act of kindness.

To some, this may come as no surprise. But to others, you need to know that [his restaurant] is owned by someone who truly cares about others.

Give him a visit whenever you can, and tell him his

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

new friend Ed said hello.

Ed Withers
Louisville

CASA needs Anderson board members

To the editor:

The Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) serving Franklin and Anderson counties is in immediate need of individuals willing to serve as active members on the board of directors or assist the organization by volunteering in other capacities.

CASA (www.franklin-andersoncountycasa.org) is a private, non-profit organization that provides trained volunteers to serve as advocates for abused and neglected children involved in Family Court.

CASA volunteers provide personal, unbiased advocacy for children that may otherwise not have a voice in Family Court.

The Franklin County CASA started in 1999 and expanded services to Anderson County in 2009. Currently there are only 12 board members and the bylaws require at least 15. CASA is severely under-

represented by board members from Anderson County.

Although the current caseload for Family Court is roughly even between the two counties, CASA only has two board members from Anderson County.

We need better representation from Anderson County to ensure board policies and programs continue to treat both counties fairly and for CASA to have a deeper connection with the broader Anderson County community.

Please consider volunteering your time and efforts to support the only non-profit organization in either county that serves the direct interest of children exposed to the harsh realities of Family Court situations.

To learn more about serving on the CASA Board, becoming a CASA volunteer or how you can support CASA, please contact me at 859-312-6398 or rfrtrue@yahoo.com. The children of Anderson County need your help now.

Rene' True
CASA Board Member

Bee garden great way to give back to earth

Sunrise to sunset, summer is awesome.

Yes, I know it can get hot, but just watch everything grow.

The warm evening temperatures have given tomatoes and peppers a big jump.

Squash is appearing overnight.

Blackberries are getting blacker by the day. Mother Nature is in full swing.

I know one of the trials of gardening is keeping the insects and critters at bay. However, there are a few flying friendlies out there that we must take care of if we plan to continue growing (and eating). Butterflies and bees are two of those flying friendlies and we must not kill them.

These two are the stars of pollination. Without them, we're toast and their populations have been going down. I've had several readers comment on the lack of bees lately, so I thought we should learn about bee gardens.

Bee gardens are pretty much the same as butterfly gardens, so you can think of this as a two-for-one plan. Even with all the clover out there, the bees have been few and far between.

There can be lots of reasons for the reduction in bee

populations, over use of pesticides springs to my mind, but we can help stop the slide by planting specific things just for them.

Native plants are the first priority. Not only are they perennials, letting you plant once and enjoy forever, they have adapted to our crazy Kentucky weather. They can take the blistering heat, the lack of rain, the pests and diseases.

Some natives can be found at just about any greenhouse or nursery. Others are a little more rare.

Some of these plants that I've listed are big box office attractions, some are simply extras standing around. All are food that will bring the bees and butterflies to your backyard, or front yard, or gardens of all types.

Planting a bee garden means planting things that provide blooms throughout the warm season months and on into fall. Moss phlox (Phlox Subulata) is a spring blooming ground cover that likes partial sunlight. Both wild Columbine (Aquilegia Canadensis) and wild geranium (Geranium Maculatum) blooms red or pink, spring to summer, in partial sunlight.

Dense Blazing Star (Liatris Spicata) blooms bright purple, all summer, in full sunlight and acidic soil. Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia Hirta) likes full sun and has big yellow blooms from summer to fall. So does Stiff

Goldenrod (Solidago Rigida). Joe Pye Weed (Lupinus Perennis) offers lavender to pink flowers in late summer. The tall Jerusalem Artichoke (Helianthus Tuberosus) really thrives in moist, nutritious soil to produce large yellow flowers in the fall.

Planting a bee garden is a way of giving back to the earth. It feeds the bees and the butterflies, who in turn, feed us. It also gives you a beautiful view, every year, without having to plant again. I think that's a no-brainer.

I promised a reader that I would give a natural remedy for a few rose problems this week.

So, here's a mix that works for both powdery mildew and black spot. Mix 1 tablespoon of baking soda and 1 teaspoon of plain liquid soap (not antibacterial) to 1 gallon of water and spray in the early morning. Repeat every three days during the growing season.

Now, since we're already working from sunrise to sunset, please take a few moments to watch the sun go down.

Besides the great view, it gives you a chance to look up instead of down at that growing patch of weeds in the garden.

Happy growing.

Cheryl Steenerson is a gardening columnist for The Anderson News.



Cheryl Steenerson
Columnist

America's second Declaration of Independence

This July 4 marks the nation's 236th anniversary from British rule. However, 2012 is also another important date in our nation's history. This year marks our 200th anniversary from our second independence from British domination during the War of 1812.

In June 1812 America once again went to war against the greatest military power in the world. Britain along with Canadians and Native Americans were the targets of America's burgeoning spirit of independence and international liberty. It was a small but bitter war that most Americans have forgotten. Yet it not only brought us our national anthem but it forged the destiny for the country and the

North American continent for 200 years.

The antagonist of this war was Britain and it's seizing of American cargo as well as its impressment of American sailors. Britain was at war with France during this time. The United States was exercising its independence by trading with countries across the globe. Thomas Jefferson had hoped this would spread liberty of the seas and trade amongst all nations. As a result, America openly traded with both Britain and France as they waged war against each other.

Britain resented the United States supplying France with supplies. Britain therefore began seizing all US cargo headed for France as well as impressing American soldiers into the service in the British Navy. Their excuse for impressment (unpaid service) was once a British citizen, always a British citizen. Americans were also resentful of the fact the

British in Canada were using Native American's to harass American settlers in the growing Northwest Territory.

The protagonist for the war was Kentucky's one and only Henry Clay, the "War Hawk." Clay was agitating for war, due to British violations of maritime rights as well as Britain's encouragement of Native American hostility towards American expansion in the West. Clay and his War Hawks convinced President James Madison that a declaration of war was necessary to stop British hostility and promoted American independence and prosperity. On June 18, 1812, the president signed a declaration of war against the British Empire.

Initial campaigns did not fail well for the Americans with numerous defeats along the Canadian border. Kentucky governor Isaac Shelby under stood that Kentucky soldiers needed Kentucky

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Meaghan Downs
Staff writer



Bill McHugh
Guest Columnist

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